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SIPDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (CHANGED SUBJECT LINE)

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: IRAQIYYA LIST COR MEMBER DISCUSSES POTENTIAL SISTANI-
ALLAWI MEETING AND GOVERNMENT FORMATION

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Classified By: Political Counselor Robert S. Ford for
Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. Council of Representatives (CoR) and Iraqiyya List member Shaykh Jamal Abd al-Mehdi al-Shemari (Wasit) told PolOff March 26 that the List is trying to arrange a visit by Ayad Allawi to Ayatollah Sistani in Najaf. He also mentioned that he is exploring preliminary talks with the Sadrists. He blasted the advisory National Security Council as useless and said Jafari's nomination could still fail in a Council of Representatives vote. He also described the tribal security efforts in Wasit. END SUMMARY

Potential Meeting Between Allawi and Sistani Being Arranged

¶2. (C) Al-Shemari told PolOff March 26 that the 25 Iraqiyya List Council of Representatives (CoR) members meet weekly to discuss the latest political developments. He said committees had been formed to open negotiations with various parties, adding that he is a member of the committee charged with approaching Ayatollah Sistani. This committee also includes Shaykh Husayn Ali al-Sha'lan and Muhammad Tawfeeq Allawi. He said they planned to visit Sistani March 25, but decided to wait for Allawi to return from Cairo to determine if he will go. Al-Shemari affirmed that the visit has been arranged with Sistani's office, and that the meeting will be with Sistani himself. He stated that all of the political parties have visited Sistani, and the Iraqiyya List did not want to be left out. He added that the meeting's purpose is mainly introductory to allow them to present the List's program. He said there are no special demands or subjects.

¶3. (C) Al-Shemari said he does not expect any trouble in Najaf as happened when Allawi visited the city December 4. He stated that he was one of the people involved with that visit, adding that he told Allawi's advisors that he needed more time to prepare for the visit (security), but they did not listen. He said Allawi's advisors did not think through the visit very well since many Sadr supporters were in Najaf attending the memorial for Muqtada al-Sadr's father.

Sadrists: Preliminary Discussions May Occur

¶4. (C) When asked whether the delegation to Najaf would also visit Muqtada al-Sadr, he responded that the Iraqiyya list has had preliminary contact with the Sadrists. Specifically, he told PolOff that he was approached by Nasir Yasir (who he claimed is related to Muqtada al-Sadr), but has not spoken to him yet and does not know what he has in mind. He also does not know if Yasir is representing the Sadrists broadly or just himself. He stated that he has a good reputation with the Sadrists, and he will try to exploit this contact and start negotiations. He added that there is no broad strategy on this effort within the Iraqiyya List but that everyone is working to strengthen relationships with others.

Thoughts on Government Formation Negotiations

¶5. (C) Al-Shemari said differences exist between SCIRI and Dawa within the Shia Coalition. He claimed that Abdulaziz al-Hakim and SCIRI are upset with Jafari, particularly with his insistence on power and staying PM. He claimed that Abdulaziz al-Hakim had come to Ayad Allawi's twice after Jafari's nomination to complain. He speculated that more divisions within the Shia Coalition will follow, although these may not be public. He said Iraqiyya had approached Tawafuq to tone down its rhetoric (or risk unifying the Shia Coalition), adding that moderate rhetoric will encourage these divisions. He predicted that if Jafari's PM nomination came to a vote in the CoR, it would fail.

¶6. (C) As for the National Security Council (NSC), al-Shemari professed not to know the result of the negotiations in terms of the council's authorities. When told that there seemed to be an agreement on an advisory council, he responded that such a council would be "useless." He pointed to Iraq's neighbors, Iran and Turkey, as examples of countries with NSCs that have power to oversee and guide the government. He said an advisory council will not be able to steer the government.

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Tribes Providing Effective Security in Wasit Governorate

¶7. (C) Al-Shemari told PolOff that, as a tribal shaykh, he participated in the security of the Wasit Governorate for about one year after the end of the Saddam regime. He said the lack of terrorist activities in Wasit results from tribal efforts. He said the tribes are in charge of security for part of the governorate in coordination with the provincial government. For example, the tribes maintain security on part of the main highway in Wasit. He said there have been clashes with insurgents and other criminal elements. He added that the tribal forces were initially separate from the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), but that they have submitted names to the governor of people to join the Police and Army.

¶8. (C) BIONOTE. Jamal Abd al-Mehdi Ali al-Shemari was born in Wasit in 1950. He rose to the rank of captain in the Iraqi Army before he was forced to resign in 1982 after his cousin was executed reportedly for being a religious man. He then worked in agriculture until 2003, when he started a trading company. He is a member of the Iraqi-American Chamber of Commerce. He told PolOff that he joined the Iraqiyya list because it contains religious men like Sheikh Ayad Jamal al-Din and other well-qualified people. He said other parties (e.g., Shia Coalition, Laith Kubba, etc.) asked him to join their lists. He hopes to join the Agriculture Committee in the CoR.
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